

impax

Vol 1 Issue 2 Mar/Apr 05

**The
Fast
The
FURIOUS
The
Fatal**



U.S.ARMY

Army Non-Tactical Risk-Management Information

the Fast go hard or go home

MICHAEL "TREE" KIESTER
CP-12 Intern
377 ABW/SEW
Kirtland AFB, N.M.

On a lonely four-lane highway in Oklahoma

two men with fast cars met to find out who was the fastest. The Nissan Z-car's driver had his girlfriend with him while I was driving a Ford Mustang Mach I with my best friend onboard. On the third honk of the

horn we roared down the highway to see who would be the champion.

The Nissan was an early 90's model with twin-turbos. Sequential fuel injection was the order of the day when the car was made, along with overhead cams. The car had been lowered and had 17" shoes with BFGoodrich Comp G's. It was one of the faster cars of its day, and the driver

wondered if it would be fast enough that night. My 30-year-old Mach I was at the other end of the spectrum. It was built 12 years before I was born and had 15" wheels shod with a set of Goodyear Redlines. The Mach I's 351 Windsor pushrod engine was fed by a Carter AFB carburetor.

Although both cars had been modified, it all came down to the drivers. We had to hit our shifts and push our machines to the limit to win. I shifted into fourth as we hit 80 mph. The Nissan was in fifth, but the Mach I kept pulling away. I was ahead by two car lengths as we hit 120 mph. It was then we saw something that scared us both—the blue, red, and white lights of a sheriff's car in the opposite lanes.

I drove onto an

access road without ever letting off the gas. The old Mustang was not the best handling car, especially when it came to making high-speed turns. The left rear tire just brushed the grass, and the car began sliding sideways. Through sheer willpower, finesse and, probably divine intervention, I kept the car from crashing through a barbed wire fence into a freshly plowed field. I kept the hammer down as I came to an intersection. I waited too long before deciding to turn, so the Mach I careened into a front yard, and then the engine quit. The engine was flooded, and I was cranking it and begging it to come to life when I saw lights coming on in the house. The smell of raw fuel was spewing



from the tailpipes and underneath the hood as I floored the accelerator trying to get the choke to set. The engine finally came to life, rocking and knocking as the spark plugs burned off the raw fuel. The Mach 1's engine started running properly just as the porch light came on and the front door flung open. A man came out with a double-barrel shotgun just as I tore out of his yard, pelting him with chunks of turf. My

time chasing girls and racing any car that would pull up next to me. I loved building cars and taking them to the limits to win a race, then tweaking and fixing them to do it again the following weekend. I never got injured, and the worst incident I had with the public or law enforcement was the one I just described.

I eventually found a better way to race and started taking my cars to the track. I had an Austin Healey Sprite that I

mean I could win at the track.

I now have two kids and a wife, so I have replaced the Mach 1 with a 1988 Chevrolet K5 Blazer. However, as I drive around the installation I see souped-up cars and people who think they can drive like Dale Earnhardt Jr. Unfortunately, I also see how a lot of these drivers end up in crashes.

Have I turned against racing? Not on your life! But I would suggest if you want to race that you find a club like the Sports Club Car of America where

you can meet fellow enthusiasts and race with them in controlled situations. These clubs have safety rules and are run by enthusiasts—people who want to drive fast just like

you, but don't want to wrap their cars around a telephone pole. They'll help you avoid smashing your car and they'll also make you go hard.

Go hard or go home—but don't go hard except at the track! 🏁

Contact the author at (505) 846-4229, DSN 246-4229, or e-mail michael.kiester@kirtland.af.mil. Also, see "Mail Call" in this issue for information on how to get involved in legal competition racing.

CONNECTIONS

Interested in getting into racing? Check out the Sports Car Club of America's Web site at <http://www.scca.org/>. To learn more about autocross racing go online to <http://www.sfrscca.com/solo2/faq/auto.htm>.

passenger and I heard the sounds of shot hitting the car as we sped away.

So how did I get into this predicament? Like a lot of guys I'd spent my high school and college

autocrossed. I also raced my Mach 1 on a 1/8th mile track about 45 minutes from my hometown. I quickly found out that just because I could take a bunch of teenagers in my Mach 1 didn't



the Fast against the Wind

JIM WIEHE
Tactical Safety Specialist
Ranger Training Brigade
Fort Benning Ga.

We hear “It happened to me” stories all the time. Reflecting on the past and the things we did (if we’ve been fortunate enough to survive and grow old) is an amazing tool. Too bad younger Soldiers can’t grasp this concept yet. Sometime during my late 20’s I read that each of us will experience a major automobile crash during our lives. This was mine.

It was April 1972 and I was fresh out of the Army and enjoying civilian life again. Some old friends enticed me to go bar-hopping with them, and we joined some of their old school buddies. It was like the words from Bob Seger’s “Against the Wind”

... “I was living to run and running to live, never worried about paying or even how much I owed, moving eight miles a minute for months at a time, breaking all of the rules that would bend...”

We got tanked-up and decided to do more than just bend the rules that night. All nine of us—too drunk to see or think straight—crammed into a car. And it wasn’t just a “car,” it was a 1969 Ford Galaxy. It was made of steel and weighed a ton, was faster than a speeding bullet, and could leap tall buildings in a single bound. Or at least we thought so.

... “Wish I didn’t know now what I didn’t know then ...”

We took off and headed back to the

watering hole doing about 80 mph on a two-lane city street. The driver wasn’t slowing down for anything. The front and back seats were full with two of us sitting on someone else’s lap. Not one of us was wearing a seatbelt.

... “Against the wind, we were runnin’ against the wind, we were young and strong and we were runnin’, against the wind...”

We were getting deeper and deeper into trouble as the Galaxy swerved from side to side and bounced off parked cars on both sides of the street. Ahead was a traffic light at a five-corner intersection. Suddenly, timing the green light became critical. We made the turn, hit

another parked car and then headed for the tallest, fattest wooden utility pole I had ever seen. I didn’t have much time to think about what was about to happen.

... “I began to find myself searching, searching for shelter again and again” ...

I was sitting directly behind the driver on another passenger’s lap. As I grabbed the driver’s seatback, I had enough time to look for my fourth-point-of-contact; I figured I’d plant a kiss on it just before we hit the pole.

When I came to, I found I’d been thrown over a 4-foot-high chain-link fence. The pole had torn all the way through the Galaxy, splitting it in half right behind the driver’s seat where

I'd been sitting just seconds earlier. If you can believe it, no one was killed. Both of the driver's legs were crushed and a couple of us had broken shoulders, but somehow I came through unscathed! We must all have had our guardian angels with us that night because the pole was in front of the hospital. The emergency room staff

knew something had happened because they heard (and felt) the impact.


When i came to, i found i'd been thrown over a 4-foot-high chain-link fence.

I was 20 years old when this happened—and I almost didn't get any older. Nearly 33 years have passed

since that night. I've seen a lot more of life and understand what I almost lost.

... "But those drifter's days are past me now, I've got so much more to think about, deadlines and commitments, what to leave in and what to leave out"...

Because I was young and drunk, I almost left it "all" out. Fortunately, I lived and learned a crucial

lesson. There are many things you can safely mix with alcohol, but asphalt isn't one of them. The bottle and the throttle don't go together in my life anymore. I'm older and wiser now and I've stopped "running against the wind." 

Editor's Note: This story was originally titled "In a Galaxy..."

Contact the author at (706) 544-6443, or e-mail james.wiehe@us.army.mil.



PREPARED to Ride?

FRED FANNING
Senior Safety Manager
Office of the Director of Army Safety

are you pulling your motorcycle out of the garage in anticipation of the new riding season? Sure, you need to do proper maintenance on your bike before you hit the road, but could you be overlooking something even more important? How about doing some pre-riding maintenance on your motorcycle's most important piece of safety equipment—you?

That question might sound a little strange, but many riders jump on their motorcycles and take off with little or no personal preparation. Not getting yourself prepared before riding is dangerous,

right? You'd think we'd all know that, but in fact not all of us do. You must not only focus on riding the motorcycle, but also keep track of other vehicles, wildlife, and the road condition. Because of the hazards involved in riding, being safe is far more demanding than driving an automobile. To ride safely you must be mentally and physically fit and know your rider risk level.

mental Fitness

Where's your mind when you're preparing to ride your motorcycle? Are you concerned about family problems, weather, or the condition of the

motorcycle? Maybe you're preoccupied with work problems. As a motorcycle rider you can't afford to have your mind wander. You must constantly focus on riding your motorcycle, and you must begin focusing before beginning your ride. Before heading out, take a

Physical Fitness

You need to be physically fit to withstand the weather, long hours of sitting, and vibration of riding a motorcycle. Being physically fit also keeps your reflexes in good condition. If you're a Soldier,

to ride safely you must be mentally and physically fit and know your rider risk level.

few minutes to think about the ride and consciously push any distractions out of the way.

the Army Physical Fitness program will help prepare you to ride. If you're a civilian employee or family member, a

light physical fitness program—such as walking, stretching, or swimming—can be helpful. You also need to have your hearing and vision checked—especially if you're over 40. Older riders are buying bikes now more than ever before. The bottom line—the better shape you're in, the better prepared you are to ride.

Risk Level

How much risk do you take as a motorcycle rider? If you don't know, you may be taking too much. Each of us has a different threshold of risk acceptance, so it's very important to

identify your risk level. Your risk level includes the type of bike you ride, your bike's condition, the gear you wear, your experience level, and the weather conditions. Take some time and think about the risks you're accepting and decide whether or not they're too high. Once you know your risk level, you can make conscious choices to reduce those risks.

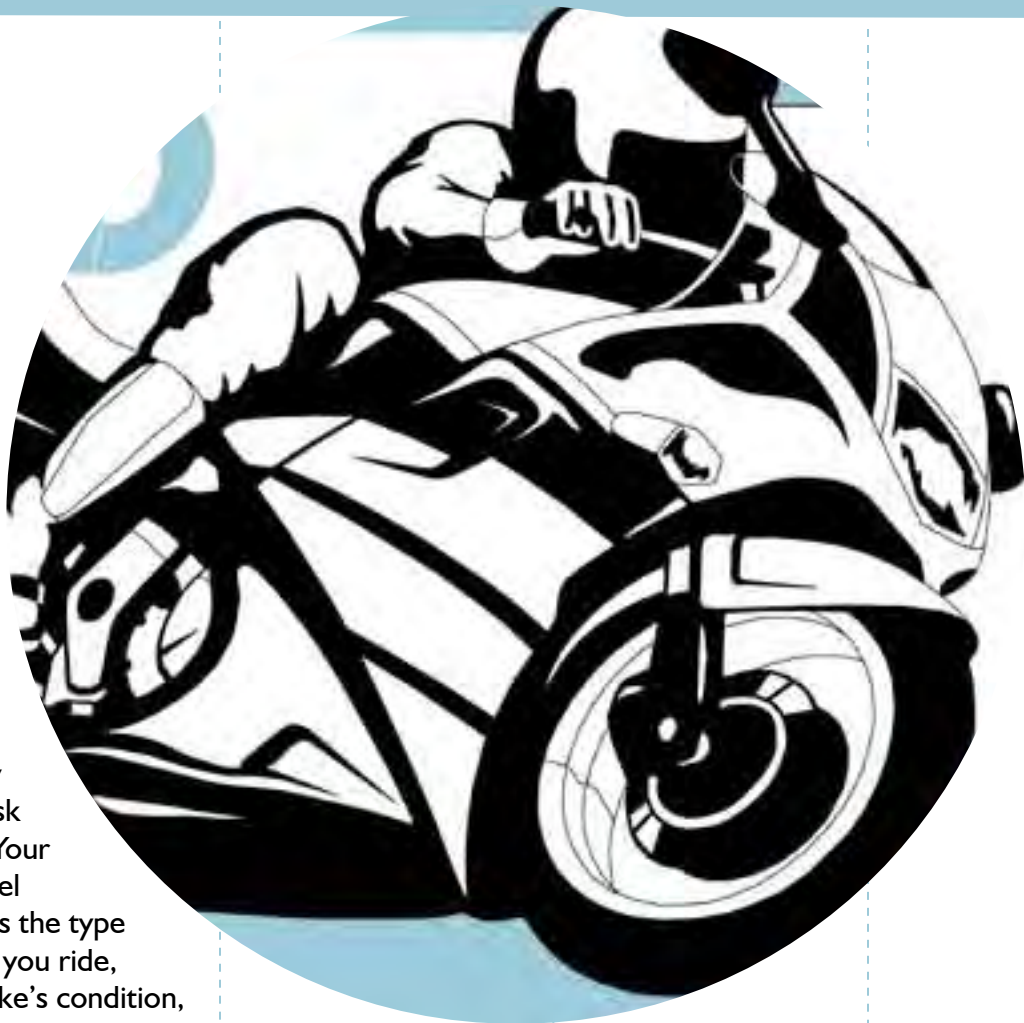
summary

You can reduce your potential for a motorcycle accident by preparing yourself

mentally and physically before you ride. Riding a motorcycle takes more risk managing than driving a car and most—if not all—riders know that. To be a successful motorcyclist always stay focused on the ride, be physically fit, and know your risk level. Let motorcycling be fun and enjoyable. 🏍️

*Editor's Note:
Prior to his current*

*assignment, Fred Fanning served as a Motorcycle Safety Foundation RiderCoach and also as the director of safety for Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. He can be contacted by e-mail at **fred.fanning@us.army.mil**.*



THE FURIOUS

Road Rage

CLOSE ESCAPE

Warrior Story

Editor's Note: Have you ever been the victim of a rude driver? Perhaps someone cut you off, tailgated you, wouldn't let you pass, or kept honking their horn at you. The most natural reaction is anger, which can quickly turn into road rage. But is it worth it to use a car as a weapon to "get even?" Read on and see how road rage played out for one Soldier.

I was driving to work early in the morning and feeling impatient with the other drivers on Interstate 35. As I was exiting I-35, the driver of a car on the access road didn't properly yield—which really set me off. One second I was calmly

driving, and the next I wanted to go through the sunroof. I caught up to the offending car and tried to pass it, but the driver sped up. I decided I'd show him, so I punched the gas and shot forward. Now mind you, we were fast approaching the stoplight for the gate into Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio. Still reeling with anger I cut off the offending driver, then looked ahead and saw I was in serious trouble. There was a car stopped in front of me waiting to turn into the base, and three cars on my left waiting to go straight at the light. I slammed onto the brakes and stopped about a foot from the car in front of me. I think I left at least a

30-foot skid mark.

I am grateful to God the road was dry and that I'd straightened the wheel before hitting the brakes. If the road had been wet, I'm sure there would have been a serious accident with injuries. And for what—to beat someone by a car's length into the

gate? No accident is worth that.

Like I said, this changed the way I drive and how I feel when I'm driving. I get a bit upset when other drivers are rude, but now I don't let it get to me. If I do get ruffled, I just think back to that morning and what could have happened. For your



safety, your family's safety, and the safety of others around you on the road, think about what you're doing. Don't let your emotions—especially your anger—rule the road!

things not to do on the road

You can't control the behaviors of other drivers, but you can control your own. Here are some tips to help you avoid accidentally sparking an incident of road rage or, if someone else is acting rudely, prevent the incident from becoming violent.

- Don't block the passing lane. Stay out of the far-left lane and yield to the right for any driver who wants to overtake and pass you.

- Don't tailgate. Maintain a safe distance from the vehicle in front of you. Dozens of deadly traffic altercations have occurred when one driver tailgated another.

- Use your signals. Don't switch lanes without first signaling your intentions, and then make sure you

don't cut someone off when you move over. Turn your signal off after you've made the maneuver.

- Don't make rude gestures. You're playing Russian roulette if you raise a middle finger to another driver. Obscene gestures frequently spark violence.

- Don't blow your horn in anger. Use your horn sparingly. If you must get someone's attention in a non-emergency situation, tap your horn lightly. Don't blow your horn at the driver in front of you the second the light turns green—that can set off a stressed-out driver.

- Avoid blocking the right-hand lane at an intersection. In most areas, right-hand turns are allowed after a stop at a red light. Avoid the right-hand lane if you're not turning right.

- Be considerate when parking. Don't take more than one parking space and don't park illegally in a handicapped space. Don't allow your door to swing open and strike the vehicle next

to you. Look before backing up.

- Use your headlights properly. Keep your headlights on low beam unless unlighted conditions require the use of high beams. Dim your lights for oncoming traffic. Don't retaliate to oncoming high beams with your own to "teach them a lesson." Don't approach a vehicle from behind with your high beams on, and dim your lights as soon as a passing vehicle is alongside.


- Don't block traffic. If you're pulling a trailer or driving a cumbersome vehicle and impeding traffic behind you, pull over when you have the opportunity and let the other motorists pass. Also, don't block the road to have a conversation with a person in another vehicle or a pedestrian on the sidewalk.

- Be careful when you use the cell phone. Don't allow the phone to become a distraction—keep your eyes and attention on the road.

Cell phones can be great for security, but bad for safety. In addition, cell phone users are widely thought of as being poor drivers and constituting a road hazard. Aggressive drivers hate having accidents with motorists who've been talking on a cell phone.

- Don't annoy others with your car alarm. If you have an antitheft alarm in your vehicle, make sure you know how to turn it off. When buying an alarm, select one that turns off after a short period of time.

- Avoid inflammatory displays. Refrain from showing any type of bumper sticker or slogan that could be offensive.

- Avoid a stare-down. If a hostile motorist tries to pick a fight, don't make eye contact. This can be seen as a challenging gesture and may incite the other driver to violence. 

SGT Near Miss

THERESA VANN
871st Troop Command
Camp Robinson, Ark.

I don't have a blood and guts story to tell you, but I could have. My story didn't happen at a large Army post; but it could have. Instead, it happened at a small National Guard

Management Directorate, storing computer equipment and signing it out to other National Guard units in the state.

After my leadership heard I was an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)-certified forklift trainer, I was asked to give forklift safety training. Our department didn't have a forklift, so we borrowed one from a larger warehouse. While I made arrangements

for the training, the word spread. My class grew from one person to 20 in a few hours.

I began the training by having the students take a pre-certification test. This gave me an idea of each student's experience in forklift

operation and safety. I then had the students watch a short video on forklift hazards and take a written test. I finished their training by giving the students hands-on instruction on the forklift.

I'd already been to the warehouse and watched the personnel who were to be in my certification class and their forklift practices. One person in particular, I'll call him "SGT Near Miss," quickly caught my attention. He was driving too fast and wasn't wearing his seatbelt. I mentioned this to the warehouse supervisor and he assured me SGT Near Miss would be attending the certification class.

I began the hands-on part of the training by identifying the forklift's major parts. I then covered the proper steps drivers needed to

take before starting the engine, which included fastening their seatbelts. From that moment on SGT Near Miss began arguing with me saying, "That's not how we do it here," and telling me I didn't know what I was talking about. He was disrupting the class, so I decided to test him first so he could leave and go back to work. That way I could train the rest of the class without having to put up with his heckling. During his hands-on training he protested using his seatbelt; however, he eventually did fasten it. I asked him to take a tall pallet load and go across the ramp. He did it improperly, so I stopped him in the process. He said some words I won't repeat, and then did what I asked him to. When he was finished, I thanked him and dismissed him



installation.

I joined the Army National Guard after eight years on active duty and was on an Active Guard and Reserve (AGR) tour replacing a soldier serving in Iraq. I worked for the Information

ASSESS YOUR FORKLIFT KNOWLEDGE

Take this short quiz on forklift facts and operation. If you see a need for training in your facility, please contact your installation safety personnel.

- 1) T or F
You should lean out of your truck seat compartment in an effort to see.
- 2) T or F
Wet places may decrease your traction and breaking to the point of losing control and should be avoided when possible.
- 3) T or F
Drive in reverse when you can't see to go forward.
- 4) T or F
Lowering the load lowers the combined center of gravity, reducing the danger of overturning when rounding corners.
- 5) T or F
All regular highway vehicles steer with the front wheels. Many (if not all) industrial trucks—particularly fork lift trucks—steer with their rear wheels.
- 6) T or F
Riders are not permitted unless a truck is equipped with a factory engineered passenger's station.
- 7) T or F
No lift truck functions (including hydraulics) may be operated unless the operator is on the lift truck and in the proper position to operate the controls.
- 8) T or F
You should slow down and sound your horn at intersections.
- 9) T or F
Sometimes you can carry a capacity load on just one fork—such as with a sling.
- 10) T or F
If the truck is equipped with a factory-approved seatbelt, it must be worn at all times.

11) List four ways of remaining in a lift truck when it is overturning.

1.
2.
3.
4.

from the class. As I was instructing the remaining students, SGT Near Miss drove through the training area several times at high speed without his seatbelt.

After the students completed their hands-on training, I told the warehouse supervisor I'd give him the certification licenses in a couple of weeks.


When I saw him two weeks later, I gave him forklift certifications for all of my students except SGT Near Miss. As an OSHA-certified trainer, I could not and would not give him an operator's license. The warehouse supervisor called in SGT Near Miss's immediate supervisor and we went over the information. The

warehouse supervisor called me the following week and told me that SGT Near Miss was no longer employed at the installation.

I regret SGT Near Miss refused to follow a few simple steps to help avoid accidents and keep his job. He was an accident waiting to happen, but at least he won't have his accident here. Will

11. 1) Wear seat belt.
- 2) Lean forward and put both hands on steering wheel.
- 3) Plant both feet firmly on the floor board.
- 4) Lean away from the roll.
1. False
2. True
3. True
4. True
5. True
6. False
7. True
8. True
9. False
10. True

Answers

he, or someone like him, have an accident at your installation? Keep your eye out for the SGT Near Misses. They're just waiting to become statistics. 

Editor's Note:

Want a good example of why forklift safety is important? Read "Hurry Up and Get Hurt," published in the March 2004 issue of Countermeasure. You can find it online at <https://safety.army.mil/home.html>.

Contact the author by e-mail at teresa.vann@us.army.mil.

the Fatal TOO LATE FOR SORRY

SSG PAT "MACK" MCCORMICK
HHD Joint Force Headquarters Missouri
Ike Skelton ANG Training Site
Jefferson City, Mo

I met Tom (not his real name) in a most unusual way. I was a corrections officer, and he was an inmate. I was fairly new to the lifestyle of prison. I had been there less than a year. Tom had already served 15 years and had 30 more to go. He could possibly be out in another 10 years ... possibly.

I was inprocessing newly arrived inmates, sorting through their belongings, taking out what they weren't allowed to keep, and confiscating contraband. Tom was an orderly in the receiving hall and helped out with the manual labor and some of the paperwork. He was as nondescript as any other inmate there; scraggly hair, unkempt

beard, fingers brown at the tips with stains from home-rolled cigarettes. He wore the same prison gray uniforms, and the same black paper-thin shoes given to new inmates. His "grays" were a little better pressed and he didn't smell as bad as the new arrivals but, other than that, he was no different.

Tom and I got to talking one day while waiting for the transfer bus to arrive. Usually, guards don't ask an offender why he is prison. Ask an inmate and he'll typically tell you he's a "stone cold killer." However, do a little digging and you may find out he's in for child molestation, rape, robbery, or even passing bad checks. Inmates use the "killer story" so that everyone

else leaves them alone—at least that's the intent. Since an inmate usually handles your inprocessing paperwork and the prison grapevine is better than AT&T, you're "tagged" before you ever make it out of receiving.

Tom sat there with his eyes straight ahead; a stub of a cigarette tucked behind his ear, his hands cupped over his knees and spoke in a clear, even voice. "I've been here just over 15 years—15 YEARS and I can't even see the light at the end of the

tunnel," he said. "I'm a killer. Never would have thought I'd ever wear that label, but in here it isn't a big deal."

I asked him if it was gang related, a robbery gone bad, or what. He didn't have that coldness, that matter-of-fact attitude that the really mean ones have. He was just an average guy who probably wouldn't end up on top in a fight. He said, "No, nothing like that. I was an investment counselor. I had over eight years in and was fast-tracking to the top.

CONNECTIONS

This article was submitted as a Warrior Story. If you'd like to read other Warrior Stories or have your own story to share, just go to our Web site at https://safety.army.mil/warrior_stories/.

Another six months and I would have been senior accounts manager, making more than \$250,000 with incentives.”

He continued, “I’d been busting my butt all week for this client and had just wrapped up an account that might have shaved two months off my time for the manager position. I was worn-out, feeling tense and needed to unwind; so I stopped at this watering hole we’d all go to and started belting them down. I probably had three or four shots, along with some beers, before I started to loosen up.” As he spoke, I noticed his head start to droop. He was now staring at the floor, his hands rubbing together—anxious wringing.

“I stayed at the bar until almost everyone was gone—you know, the break between when the daytimers leave and the night owls come

in. Everyone else headed home to their families. I knew I would be home late, so I’d told my wife and kids to go on to her folk’s house and I’d come up in the morning.

I never made it,” he said. “I figured I’d stop and grab a six pack, go home and watch the sports wrap-up at 10:00 p.m. After that I was going to crash so I could be up early and get on the road. I made it to the grocery store, bought the beer, popped a top and headed home. I was about five miles from home feeling no pain and thinking I was in total control. I’d done this a thousand times, so it was no problem. I rounded a curve and “maybe” got a little over the line (into the oncoming lane) when these headlights were right in my eyes. I don’t know how the car got there without me seeing it, and

I don’t remember much after the crash.”

His tone had changed and he spoke lower and more direct. “They

fractured ribs from the steering wheel. I had my seatbelt on—‘lucky me,’ he said sarcastically.

“The police were



say I was doing over 70 mph when we hit—but I don’t know. I couldn’t even tell you what kind of car it was. The next day I awoke in a hospital with a fractured clavicle and right arm, several cuts and bruises, and two

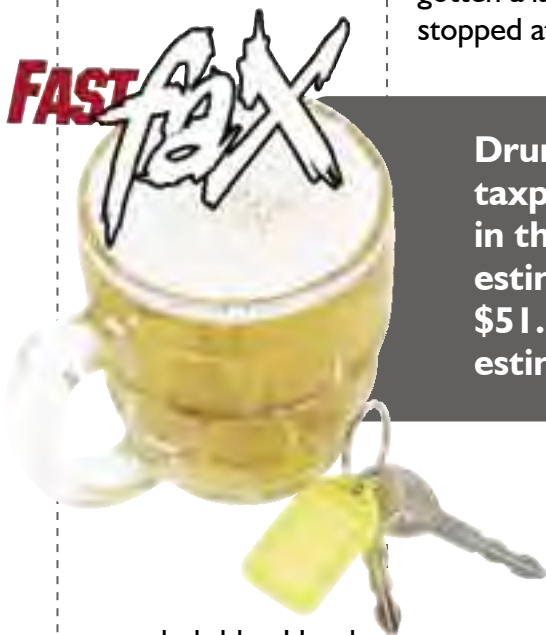
there questioning me about the open beer in the car and how much I had drank prior to that beer. All I wanted them to do was to notify my wife and tell her I’d been in an accident but was all right, “he droned. “The cops looked

back and forth at each other and asked me if I saw the car I'd hit, and I said 'No.' They then told me there was a woman and two children ages 6 and 8 in the car, which was a brand-

because she'd been the driver in the other car and was dead, as were the two children. I had wiped out my entire family and never even realized what was happening. They'd gotten a late start and stopped at a store for

while intoxicated (DUI), careless and reckless driving, speeding, and a whole list of things. The fact that I'd gotten a few other DUI's in the past gave the judge all he needed to throw the book at me. I told everyone I was

This is a true story and the inmate is serving his time at the Jefferson City Correction Center in Jefferson City, Mo. His family's lives were ended and his own shattered that night all because he chose to drink and



Drunk driving is an expensive problem for taxpayers. Alcohol-related traffic crashes in the United States cost the public an estimated \$114.3 billion in 2000, including \$51.1 billion in monetary costs and an estimated \$63.2 billion in quality of life losses.

new, dark-blue Honda Accord. They said they needed to read me my rights before asking any further questions, and did so. As I was listening to the words "You have the right to remain silent," I thought, 'dark-blue Honda?—that's the same kind of car my wife drives. Two kids—OH, NO!—it couldn't be!'"

The police informed me they couldn't call my wife


snacks on the way out of town.

They knew I would be up in the morning, so (there was) no need to wait for dad," he said.

"I don't even remember my trial—or much about anything after that—except for all the screaming and crying from her family and mine after I was sentenced. I was convicted of three counts of vehicular homicide, driving

sorry—so terribly sorry, but it was too late for sorry."

I felt empathy for the guy and at the same time felt sad for his poor family, which he'd wiped out because of his stupidity. He will have to live with what he did for the rest of his life. When he walks out of prison he'll have nothing waiting for him except the memories of that fateful night. He'll relive that night over and over in his mind, but the outcome can never change.

drive. To him, he was in total control of his facilities—not the least bit impaired—and just heading home from a hard day of work. To his family he was a low-flying, speeding missile traveling in the wrong lane. He was their husband, father, protector—but in the end, their killer. 

Contact the author at (573) 638-9824, or by e-mail at patrick.mccormick@us.army.mil.



the Fatal a RECIPE FOR disaster

JOSEPH W. HAFNER
Tactical Safety Specialist
18th Airborne Corps
Ft. Bragg, N.C.

a couple of paratroopers getting ready to return to Fort Bragg, N.C., from their deployment for Operation Enduring Freedom decided they'd go to their favorite restaurant and order the biggest steaks on the menu. They'd only been back for 48 hours when they followed through with their plan.

After their great meal, they went to a local club. Around 9 p.m., one of the paratroopers began to feel sick and passed out. His buddies took him outside, put him in the rear of an extended-cab pickup, and then returned to the club.

Around 1:30 a.m. the pickup's driver, who'd been drinking, left the club and began driving home. About a half-hour later he fell asleep and the pickup drifted off the right side of the road. The driver awoke and jerked the wheel to the left. However, he turned

too sharply, the pickup began sliding sideways, and he completely lost control.

The truck hit the only tree within 300 yards. The impact was so hard the pickup flew into the air, spun 200 degrees and ejected the unbelted driver. The young paratrooper in the back was tossed around inside the truck's cabin. When the pickup finally came to rest, the engine burst into flames. The young paratrooper, still inside the truck, never made it out.

There were four contributing factors to this accident: alcohol, fatigue, speed, and not wearing seatbelts. These factors have come to be known as the "Recipe for Disaster." Alcohol blurred the driver's judgment and made him more vulnerable to fatigue. Speed, combined with not wearing seatbelts, turned the driver into a human projectile and injured the passenger



too badly to escape the burning truck. That night two Soldiers paid a horrible price, and the consequences went well beyond affecting just them.

Soldiers need to understand the decisions they make, like drinking and driving, affect many other people. The driver didn't plan on killing his friend—but he did. The driver also didn't plan on going to prison, but he's now serving 30 months for manslaughter. What about the impact on the dead Soldier's family, his roommate, his team, or his squad? Who is going to carry his M240 machine gun? Who is going to be the "go-to guy" on the weekends when the guys in the barracks want to play

football?

Next time you're out drinking, remember you've already got the key ingredient for a DUI accident. Don't mix your own recipe for disaster by getting behind the wheel. 🚗💥

Contact the author at (910) 396-7233, fax (910) 396-9460, or by e-mail at hafnerjw@bragg.army.mil.

ELECTRICity

the UNFORGIVING TRUTH

MINNICK L. EARGLE
Tactical Safety Specialist
XVIII Airborne Corps
Fort Bragg, NC

Summer was almost over and my friend Kevin was about to start high school. He was the youngest of three children, and was very outgoing and a good athlete. He also enjoyed helping his father work around their home.

Early one morning Kevin's father asked him to do some weed eating in the front yard. Kevin quickly went to the garage and grabbed the weed eater and an extension cord. He

electrical outlet. As Kevin got started, his dad failed to notice some significant but obvious dangers. First, he didn't notice that Kevin was standing barefoot on grass still wet from the morning dew. Second, he didn't notice the frayed insulation on the extension cord. Kevin, who was in a hurry to get the job done so he could spend time with his friends, also didn't notice or understand these dangers.

Within minutes tragedy struck. Shelia, a friend of Kevin's who lived across

the street, saw what happened and screamed for help as she ran toward

his motionless body. A few seconds later Kevin's dad told Shelia to call an ambulance.

Kevin's dad quickly disconnected the extension cord and checked his son for signs of life. By the time the ambulance arrived, Kevin had stopped breathing. The ambulance crew rushed Kevin to the hospital, but it was too late. He was pronounced dead. Afterwards, Kevin's father couldn't stop asking himself how he could've let this happen.

This was a tragic incident for the entire family. The church was overflowing when I went to the funeral to pay my last respects to Kevin. As I sat inside the church, I couldn't help but think of how this happened. Kevin was so young and had his whole life ahead of him. Yet he died because some obvious hazards were ignored in the process of doing a simple,



everyday chore.

The lesson from Kevin's death was clear to his father, and should be to the rest of us in the Army who have families. How often do we leave safety at the gate when driving off post to go home? Is it because we think home is so non-threatening that our families won't get hurt? If that's what we think, we are blinding ourselves to the hazards that might be right there in our own front yard. ☹

Contact the author at (910) 396-7233, or by e-mail at eargleml@bragg.army.mil.

CONNECTIONS

For more information on electrical safety, visit the Electrical Safety Foundation International's Web site at <http://www.esfi.org/>

stretched out the cord, plugging one end into the weed eater and the other into an

head over heels on wheels

WILLIAM J. LADD
CP-12 Intern
Fort Drum, NY

Every Monday when I read the Watertown Daily Times I usually see at least one article about someone being injured or killed while riding an all-terrain vehicle (ATV). When I got off active duty and became a Department of the Army Civilian, I considered buying an ATV. I'd decided to move to upstate New York, where ATVs are very popular. As I was thinking about buying an ATV, I remembered my first ride on one.

It was about 10 years ago and I was home on leave in upstate New York. My uncle, who lived out in the country, had just purchased an ATV and offered to let me take it for a ride. As

a teenager, I'd ridden motorcycles, go-carts, snowmobiles, and just about anything that had wheels, skis, and a motor. I figured this wouldn't be any harder; in fact, it looked fairly easy to me. I jumped on the ATV wearing just my shorts and slip-on shoes—no helmet,

ATVs can be hazardous to operate. For your safety, always wear a helmet, eye protection and protective clothing. Always avoid paved surfaces. Never ride on public roads. Never carry passengers or engage in stunt riding. Avoid excessive speeds. Riding and alcohol or other drugs don't mix. Be extra careful on difficult terrain.

no shirt. After all, I was just going to take a little spin.

I rode around for 10 to 15 minutes to get the feel of the ATV, and then decided to go up a hill behind the barn. I'd done this many times on other machines, so I was confident I could make

it on the ATV.

As I climbed the hill, the ATV's engine began to slow down and lose power. I wasn't familiar with the shift pattern, so I couldn't find a lower gear. The machine

suddenly started rolling backwards and then flipped on top of me. When it did, I got badly scraped and bruised, and one of the tires struck me in the head.

There was very little damage to the machine. It was only later that I realized how close I'd come to being killed or seriously injured. Had I been hit by the tire's metal rim, I could have wound up with a fractured skull. Had I landed a little further down the hill and off to the side, I could have ended up on some downed trees and impaled on a sharp



branch. I was very fortunate that day.

My message to potential ATV riders is simple. Get very familiar with your equipment before you ride, take a safety course, don't ride beyond your skills, and wear the appropriate safety gear. Also, consider joining a local club. The members can help you with safety, instruct you on legal places to ride, give you a riding buddy, and keep you in touch with the environment. ATVs are not dangerous, but inexperienced and inconsiderate riders are.

Contact the author at DSN 772-5352, or by e-mail at william.ladd@us.army.mil.

CONNECTIONS

If you'd like to find out more about ATV safety and rider training, check out the **ATV Safety Institute** online at <http://www.atvsafety.org/>, or call (800) 887-2887.

better trained than lucky

SPC JONATHAN M. STIFFLER
551st Medical Logistics Company
Fort Lewis, WA

I had just returned from my first deployment to Kuwait, where my unit spent three months supporting our fellow Soldiers in Iraq. During my downtime, I spent almost the entire deployment dreaming of the motorcycle I wanted. I finally picked one—the three-time American Motorcycle Association champion Suzuki GSX-R 750. It's an amazing bike, and I knew I'd be able to afford one when I got back.

When I got home, I quickly started shopping for the bike. I soon bought one and also purchased a jacket, helmet and gloves—all of which were top-of-the line. I watched the motorcycle being uncrated and the

engine started for the first time. It was like watching something being born. Unfortunately, I'd never ridden a motorcycle—let alone one that weighed more than 300 pounds. My best friend had to put the first miles on the Suzuki to get it home.

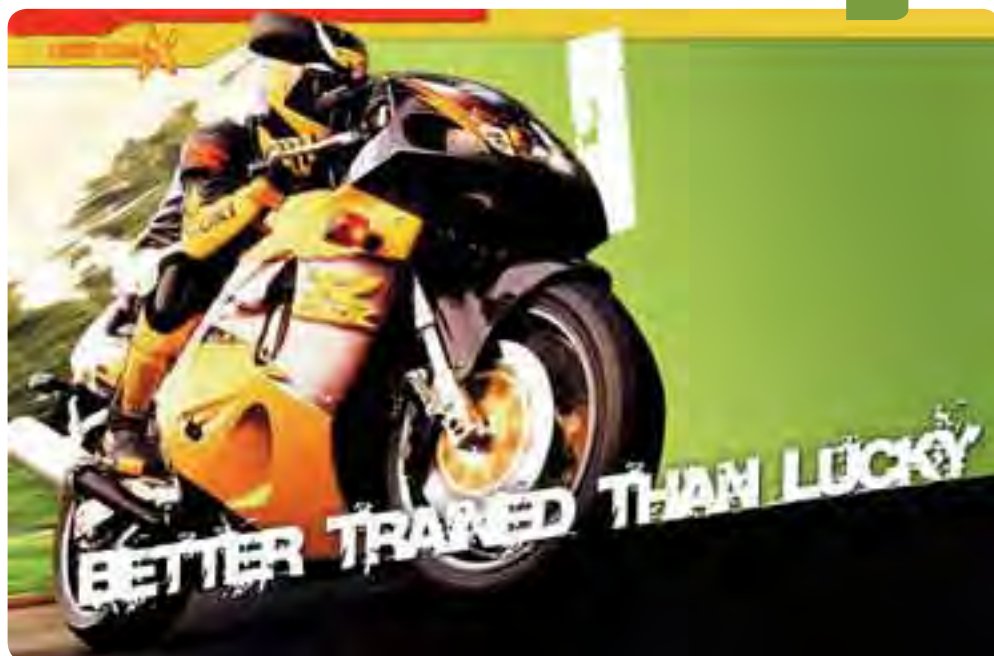
Shortly after I got the bike, I practiced riding it in a parking lot and on some local roads. I also went and got my permit and motorcycle

license. I told my chain of command I'd purchased the bike and was looking forward to riding it that summer. They told me to look at the Fort Lewis regulations and Army policies on motorcycle riding and make sure I abided by them.

I soon found out that I lacked the required Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) Basic RiderCourseSM. I was disappointed because it would be a month

before I could get the course and meet the requirements to ride. However, after taking the course I felt much more confident in my abilities to maneuver and control the bike. Moreover, I knew how to stop the bike quickly.

As the months went by, I really enjoyed riding my bike. On a Friday I'll never forget, my commander and first sergeant gave a safety briefing. They always included motorcycle



safety in their weekly briefing, and I always laughed because I was the only motorcycle rider in the unit. I'd ridden my bike to the post that day and was getting ready to leave when my commander came up and said, "Ride safe!" I laughed, and told him I would.

It was 37 miles from the post to where I lived. The dry, hot weather was pure biker bliss. I was about 15 minutes from post riding on Interstate 5 near the Tacoma Dome area. It's an area of I-5 where you have to be really careful because there's a curve you can't see around. I was going about 75

mph to _____ up with the traffic. I started into the curve and looked as far ahead as I could, just as I'd been taught in the safety course. What I saw shocked me. The traffic ahead had gone from 75 mph to a complete stop!

I had about 300 yards between myself and a Chevy Cavalier. My mind was racing as I searched for a way out of the mess, but the traffic didn't leave me many choices. Then I saw the outside emergency lane, which didn't look much wider than my bike. I dove into the lane, barely missing the Cavalier and passing 11 vehicles before I got the

however, after taking the course i felt much more confident in my abilities to maneuver and control the bike. moreover, i knew how to stop the bike quickly.

Suzuki stopped.

I'd just gotten the fastest—and most memorable—lesson of my short motorcycle riding career. I learned to always ride carefully and responsibly and be extra alert when approaching areas where my vision is blocked. I also realized I needed better braking skills, so I went out and practiced several high-speed stops. That day I'd almost done a high side off my bike, and the feeling of the front wheel locking up is one no biker ever

forgets. I also learned I always need to be planning a safe escape route should I have to avoid a problem on the highway.

That day should have been like any other—but it wasn't. Some people would say I was lucky—but that's not the case. It wasn't so much that I was lucky as I was fortunate. I was fortunate I'd received the MSF training I needed to help me in an emergency. I was fortunate I had a commander who cared enough to see to it I got trained, and who also encouraged me to ride safely. Most of all, I was fortunate I could count on knowing what to do—not luck—to save me that day. 🙏

Contact the author by e-mail at jonathan.m.stiffler@us.army.mil.



The 2005 Suzuki GSX-R 750 has 148 horsepower and a dry weight of 360 pounds. The 2005 Chevrolet Corvette has 400 horsepower

and weighs approximately 3,245 pounds. When compared, the Suzuki's horsepower-per-pound ratio of 1 to 2.43 is significantly more potent than the Corvette's 1 to 8.1. However,

while impressive power-to-weight ratios make high performance motorcycles very fast, they also leave little room for mistakes by inexperienced riders.

beef on the grill

SANDY THOMAS
Fort Rucker, Ala.

I've often bragged in the past about never having been in a major car accident. I've counted my blessings and always hoped that, if faced with an emergency, I'd be able to avoid any real trouble. For 25 years I'd been very fortunate—but all that ended one frightful night in May 2003.

The day began like many in our lives as an Army chaplain family, with ministry needs being met during holiday hours. It was Memorial Day weekend and my husband, Chaplain (MAJ) Mike Thomas, was performing a wedding service that Friday morning. While the couple was saying their vows, the kids and I waited patiently in our Chevy Astro van for our day of fun to begin.

We had plans to go to a theme park and had visions of roller coasters in our heads. When Mike emerged from the chapel we prayed for safety, as we often do when traveling, and hit the road.

We got to the park without any problems and enjoyed a day of rides, food and fun that ended with an exciting laser show. Although we

hadn't planned to stay late, we were mesmerized by the show and stayed until the park closed. We then had a three-hour drive home ahead of us. I volunteered to drive first, as Mike and I usually shared the driving.

Because it was the Memorial Day weekend there was a good bit of traffic on the road. However, since we were

traveling on four-lane roads, driving this night did not seem perilous. By the time I stopped for gas around 11:30 p.m., everyone else in the car had fallen asleep.

Sometime after midnight, as I was cruising along at 65 mph, a huge Angus cow ran in front of us. I never saw it coming and hit it full force. The impact brought the cow over the



hood, smashing both it and the windshield. The cow then spun to the right and landed in a ditch. As we rolled down the road, the lights went out and the brakes failed!

In that instant I envisioned my driver's education teacher, Mrs. Graham, yelling "Hold it in the road! Hold it in the road!" I gripped the steering wheel with all my strength, keeping the van going straight while praying for it to stop.

Everyone awoke and began asking

he yelled. "Someone will hit us!"

Mike pulled open the side door so he and our son Curtis could get out. The right-front side of our van was pushed in the farthest and our daughter Ashley couldn't get out her door. I helped her climb over my seat and out the driver side door. We all immediately gathered alongside the road.

It was unbelievable! The van was perfectly centered in the lane I was driving in when I hit the cow—except

i never saw it coming and hit it FULL FORCE. the impact brought the cow over the hood, smashing both it and the windshield. the cow then spun to the right and landed in a ditch.

impact site and, like a scene out of "Apocalypse Now," set the Chevy's grill emblem on the dead cow's forehead.

This episode seared into my brain several things that I already knew, but now I understand from experience:

probably landed us in the ditch—making this a much worse accident.

- If you're stopped without lights, immediately get out of your vehicle and get away from it. A car stopped on the road without lights is an obstacle waiting

to be hit by another driver. Remember to use flares or a warning triangle to alert approaching drivers.

- Listen to God in an emergency. I believe He used the memory of my driver's education teacher to help me in this crisis! 🙏

About the author: Mrs. Sandy Thomas is the wife of Chaplain (MAJ) Mike Thomas, who serves the 1-145th Aviation Regiment at Fort Rucker.

CONNECTIONS

Want to find out how the Chevrolet Astro van did in the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety's offset frontal crash tests? Go to http://www.hwysafety.org/vehicle_ratings/ce/html/96024.htm and read the full report.

questions. Mike, who was sitting behind me in the second row of seats, asked, "What did you hit?" I replied in a very uncertain voice, "A cow, I think!"

I continued to hold on as the van rolled down the dark road. We finally stopped and Mike told us to get out of the van. "We're 'black' in the road!"

we were a quarter-mile away from the point of impact!

None of us were badly injured, although we all had a few scratches and bruises. Ashley had a deep bruise on her side from her seatbelt, but God had granted our prayer of protection. We had survived a major collision! Mike walked back to the

- Driving at night is dangerous. Things you can normally see during the day become invisible or distorted at night. We now avoid traveling at night and discourage others from doing so.

- It's better to hit an animal than crash trying to avoid it. I'd been told this, but now I realize that hitting the brakes or swerving would have

BRIEFS

The following reports reflect accidents that have happened to Soldiers in their privately owned vehicles, during recreational activities, and in other non-tactical environments.

POV

Class A

- A Soldier was killed when his automobile left the roadway at night, overturned and came to rest on its wheels in a corn field. The Soldier was not wearing his seatbelt and was thrown from the vehicle.

- A Soldier was driving his automobile back to post at night from a 3-day pass when he apparently lost control, crossed the center median and collided with a tractor-trailer. The Soldier died on the scene.

- A Soldier was driving his pickup at night when he swerved to avoid a disabled vehicle in his lane and overturned. The driver was not injured, but a Soldier riding with him suffered fatal head injuries.

- A Soldier was reported to have been driving at high speed at night when he lost control, struck a guardrail, and his

vehicle overturned. The Soldier was pronounced dead at the scene.

- A Soldier was operating his automobile at night when he ran off the road and struck several parked vehicles. The driver was hospitalized for 17 days while his passenger, another Soldier, suffered fatal head injuries. The deceased Soldier was not wearing his seatbelt.

- A Soldier was driving his automobile during the day to his home station when his vehicle was struck by a tractor trailer and engulfed in flames. The Soldier was pronounced dead at the scene.

Personal Injury Class C

- During physical training a Soldier was playing basketball in the high school gym. He jumped for the ball and when he landed

broke his leg (tibia) just above the heel. He was hospitalized for 13 days, lost 30 workdays, and was on 90 days of restricted duty.

- A Soldier was playing basketball when he fell, tearing the ligaments that held his kneecap in place. The injury required surgery to correct. The Soldier was hospitalized for one day and lost 30 workdays.

- A Soldier was playing in a post basketball game at the physical fitness center. During the game he got the ball, but a player from the other team fell in front of him. Rather than tripping over the downed player, the Soldier jumped over him and landed on the other side. When he landed he heard his knees pop, and immediately fell to the floor. After the game he went to the Troop Medical Clinic (TMC) where he was given ibuprofen and a seven-day profile. When he woke up the following

day, the Soldier had reduced range of motion and returned to the TMC. Doctors took X-rays and diagnosed the Soldier with a bad sprain or strain and, possibly, a fractured patella. He was given medication, crutches and a brace, and placed on two days of quarters and seven days of restricted duty.

- A Soldier was playing basketball at the physical fitness center when he jumped up to retrieve a rebounding ball. When he landed he felt popping in his left knee accompanied by excruciating pain, and fell to the floor yelling for help. The Soldier was transported to the medical center for further evaluation. He was placed on one day of quarters and 90 days of restricted duty.

- Two Soldiers were walking from the ATM machine to their barracks at Camp Walker, Korea. As

they were walking up a hill on an uneven dirt path one Soldier lost his balance and fell, breaking his foot. He was transported to the TMC where his leg was placed in a hard cast, and he was issued crutches and given one day of quarters. The Soldier stated he'd had three beers before walking to the ATM machine.

- A military policeman was walking to the parking lot when he slipped on some ice and broke his ankle. He lost two workdays.

- In preparation for driving to work, a Soldier was scraping snow off her truck when she slipped on the ice and fell and struck her head on the concrete. She blacked out for a few seconds, then awoke and went into her quarters. She called her chain of command and advised them she was going to the emergency room. After she arrived she was given shots for pain relief and placed on one day of quarters.

- An off-duty Soldier got out of his POV to walk to the single Soldiers quarters (SSQ). As he

attempted to cross an ice-covered grass island in front of the SSQ, he slipped and fell. Another Soldier drove him to the hospital where his ankle was X-rayed and diagnosed as broken. The Soldier lost 14 workdays.

- A Soldier returned home to find his toilet had overflowed and flooded the first floor of his family housing unit. While cleaning his residence he slipped and fell down a flight of stairs. The Soldier suffered a minor contusion to his upper and lower back, and a mild concussion. He was taken to the hospital where he was evaluated and released and placed on three day's bed rest and four days of restricted duty.

- A Soldier fell and hit his head while stepping out of the shower. The Soldier, in a hurry to report for duty, was hospitalized for three days.

- A Soldier was playing ultimate Frisbee as part of his unit's physical training program. While attempting to block a throw, he fell to the ground and was kicked in the head

by another Soldier. After the game he was taken to the TMC for treatment. The doctor on duty determined he had suffered a slight concussion and placed him on 48 hours' quarters.

- A Soldier was running off duty when a car swerved and struck him from behind. The car was going approximately 30 mph when it knocked the Soldier into a ditch and then drove away. The Soldier was hospitalized for 14 days, lost 20 workdays, and was on 20 days of restricted duty.

Parting thoughts POVs

Five of the six POV accidents happened at night, when reduced visibility and fatigue can pose problems for drivers. Also, two of the six Soldiers who died weren't wearing their seatbelts. It's important to realize that the safest place a vehicle occupant can be during an accident is restrained in their seat. In frontal impacts, unrestrained occupants are thrown forward with tremendous force. Trusting a vehicle's frontal air bags for

protection is not wise because an unrestrained occupant will often slide around the air bag and strike the dash or windshield. Also, when unrestrained occupants are thrown from a vehicle they typically land in the vehicle's path and are crushed as a result.

Personal injury

Non-tactical personal injuries take a toll on unit and Army readiness. When you add the number of days hospitalized, workdays lost, and restricted duty days for these 12 Soldiers, you come up with 348—almost a full year. Basketball is one of the top sports injury producers in the Army with legs, knees and ankles typically getting the worst of it. Being aggressive is part of the sport, but don't let getting "game" get you lame. When it comes to falls a sage once observed, "There's no such thing as gravity—the earth just sucks." As the accidents show, it sucks even worse when you add ice or, heaven forbid, alcohol. Also, be alert when you're running on a roadway. Remember, on the asphalt you are NOT the top of the food chain! 🦖

mail call

SFC James A. Stevens III
Platoon Sergeant
"Paladin 17"

Editor's Note: The letter below came in via e-mail just in time to accompany our story about illegal street racing. The writer's comments are very enlightening. By the way, ImpaX is your forum to discuss POV, sports and recreation, home, and non-tactical job safety. If you've got something to share or want to respond to an article you've read in this magazine, e-mail me at robert.vanelsberg@safetycenter.army.mil. Chances are good you'll see your comments in this magazine.

I'm not writing so much to share a close-call story as I am to tell of something many Soldiers may not be aware of. I hope you'll find it useful.

The modern American youth culture has been deeply influenced by the trend toward modifying certain imported and domestic small cars—the Honda Civic and Dodge Neon being prime examples—and racing them on the street. As part of that culture, many young Soldiers also get involved in this. Some just like to add nicer-looking wheels to their car, while others spend thousands of dollars adding power and speed in search of a more competitive racer. Unfortunately, in many cases Soldiers

are participating in illegal (and often deadly) street racing. Despite new state laws toughening the penalties for those caught street racing, it continues to be a big problem. What's worse, there are plenty of opportunities for Soldiers to race legally and safely.

Among these, by far the most common is the local drag strip. Drag racing has been a fixture on the American motor sports scene for a long time. Most big cities and many smaller ones have at least a 1/8-mile—and often a full 1/4 mile—drag strip nearby. Realizing the revenue potential, many of these strips have open nights where anyone can race as long as they meet minimum

safety requirements. Typically, this requires a full-face helmet (which can often be rented or even borrowed at the track), and a car in good mechanical order. There are always paramedics on-hand, as well as the local fire department. In most cases these events are

NOT get a Soldier arrested and will drastically reduce his or her chances of being in an accident.

Another type of competition is autocross. This is similar to road racing, but is typically held in a large open lot on a course marked off with traffic cones. The Sports

having a way to race legally and safely makes street racing fairly pointless. after all, which would you rather pay \$20 to race at the local drag strip, or a fine for racing on the street?

run by the same folks who run National Hot Rod Association drag races, so their professionalism and depth of knowledge are sure to be impressive. Best of all, a night out at the local drag strip will

Car Club of America (SCCA) has autocross clubs all across the country—often in cities where there are Army installations. Each vehicle receives a technical inspection of its mechanical condition before

the event to ensure the car is safe to race. Entry fees vary, but are almost always \$25 or less for the day. The Ford SVT Owners Association (SVTOA) also holds autocross competitions through its various chapters nationwide. In addition, there are many other independent local clubs that organize autocross events, normally using the SCCA's rulebook as a guide. The course layouts are carefully managed to keep participants from hitting objects other than the cones, and to keep top speeds to around 60 miles per hour. SCCA and SVTOA events are insured for damages and bodily injury. And the last time I checked, there hadn't been a serious injury or death in an SCCA autocross in a very long time.

For the driver who needs the ultimate challenge in speed

and handling there are always big track days. Such organizations as the Porsche, BMW, and Ford SVT owners clubs often organize open track days. Safety at these events is usually stricter than at autocross or drag races, and fees for participation are typically higher—perhaps up to \$200. These events are usually attended by experienced drivers, often with amateur or professional racing backgrounds. Often driving instructors are available—and are sometimes required—to ride along with novice drivers. There are also many performance driving schools available. These are often run by former world-class professional drivers and offer weekend or week-long courses that include many hours of track time.

The point is that drivers who perform well in competition often carry their skills

back to the street. It's not so much a matter of how to drive faster, but how to handle a vehicle at high speed, properly react to dangerous situations, and be respectful of other drivers.

Having a way to race legally and safely makes street racing fairly pointless. After all, which would you rather pay—\$20 to race at the local drag strip, or a fine for racing on the street? Two Soldiers I knew at Hunter Army Airfield, Ga., got nailed for \$1,200 each (the MINIMUM fine!) for street racing. Soldiers pay attention to their wallets. I'm a Soldier, and my wallet tells me to keep it legal.

For the record, I've been a Soldier for almost 14 years. I'm an AH-64D attack helicopter repairer stationed at Camp Page, Korea. I've been a member of the Ford SVTOA and the SCCA. I've

autocrossed in several different SCCA regions, and worked corner safety at regional-level road races. I took first place at an autocross with SVTOA's South Carolina chapter in February 2004. But, most importantly, I have a clean driving record. 🏆

UNNATURAL SELECTIONS

"Unnatural SeleXions" is dedicated to those folks willing to go the extra mile to remove themselves from the gene pool.

FRYING MORE THAN THE BACON

ANONYMOUS

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

extends beyond the workplace—like maybe into the kitchen!

As we all know, PPE is an integral part of any unit's safety plan. What we tend to forget is that PPE is also something we need to use in our homes.

While stationed in Italy, I woke up one

weekend morning and decided to make breakfast. Since I was home alone, I thought there was no need to get "dressed up." Therefore I headed to the kitchen in my usual sleeping attire, which was what God gave me at birth. The menu would be short—just bacon and eggs.

I turned on the stove and tossed the bacon into the frying pan to

get started. As the heat built up, the bacon grease began to splatter. When I turned towards the stove to tend to my food, I felt a sensation like hot lava on parts of my body that should never get burned. The pain was enough to make me jump out of the way and reconsider my choice of clothing. I quickly put on an apron to finish cooking.

Although the pain

would go away and I didn't have any physical scars, I'd learned that PPE—even the simple stuff you use around home—only works if you use it. 🍳

(Editor's Note: A dozen eggs—\$.99...a pound of bacon—\$2.99...splattering hot grease while cooking in the "raw"—priceless.)

HAVING A 'BLAST'

ANONYMOUS

Several years ago I'd gotten interested in the black powder revolvers of the Old West. These old six-shooters didn't use cartridges. Instead, you poured black powder from a flask into each chamber, rammed in a lead ball on which you added a dab of grease, and then pressed an explosive cap on the nipple behind each chamber. Once loaded, the easiest way to unload one of these "cap-and-ball" percussion revolvers is

to fire it.

During my poverty days in college I bought a .36 caliber Whitney black powder revolver for plinking and home defense. I liked it and took it with me—loaded and all—when I moved to San Antonio for a civil service job. Since I could now afford a "real" handgun I decided to retire the Whitney from its home defense role. But the darn thing was still loaded.

"No sweat," I thought—"I'll just remove the percussion caps so

the Whitney can't be fired." I picked up the revolver in my left hand, pulled the hammer to half-cock, and began rotating the cylinder and removing the caps with my right hand. I knew I shouldn't have tried this inside my apartment, but what the heck, I knew what I was doing. Suddenly—and to this day I don't know how—the hammer dropped and the gun fired. My heart froze. When the smoke cleared, I saw the hole in the middle of my gunpowder flask. My

fourth point of contact puckered so tight it squeaked! Had I not emptied the flask earlier, the coroner would have been doing my autopsy with a pair of tweezers.

And the lesson learned? If you're complacent enough with firearms you can put a hole in almost anything—maybe even blow yourself up. Obviously, the smart move is not to load a firearm—especially one of these old-timers—until you mean to shoot it! 🍻

Blake Grantham
Graphic Design

Bob Van Elsberg
Managing Editor

COL John Frketic
Deputy Commander

B6 Joseph A. Smith
Commander

ImpaX is published by the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center, Bldg 4905, 5th Avenue, Fort Rucker, AL 36362-5363. Information is for accident prevention purposes only and is specifically prohibited for use for punitive purposes or matters of liability, litigation, or competition. Address questions about content to DSN 558-2688 (334-255-2688). To submit information for publication, use FAX 334-255-3003 (Mr. Bob Van Elsberg) or e-mail robert.vanelsberg@saftycenter.army.mil. Address questions about distribution to DSN 558-2062 (334-255-2062). Visit our Web site at <https://safty.army.mil/>.

ImpaX